

In re: DEANGELIA BARNES,) OEIG Case #11-00696

¹ These benefits were formerly referred to as food stamp benefits.

On September 19, 2011, the OEIG received a third complaint involving Caseworker Barnes. In the third complaint, it was alleged that Caseworker Barnes used her DHS caseworker assigned code to access DHS records related to her own child support case file. According to the complaint, Caseworker Barnes, among other things: accessed her child support case to learn about the personal financial information of her child's father; admitted she viewed the father's financial information and stated she could do so "anytime she pleases"; and was able to manipulate the system to obtain a new court date for the child support case.²

The OEIG investigated all of the above allegations of misconduct relating to Caseworker Barnes during the course of this investigation.

II. BACKGROUND

A. Authorized Illinois Disaster SNAP Benefits Resulting from Flash Flooding

In July 2010, parts of Northern Illinois suffered flash flooding, which caused those areas to be declared federal disaster areas.³ Subsequently, the Federal Government authorized DHS to offer special disaster SNAP benefits for residents of the affected areas who suffered a loss.

On August 30, 2010, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn announced that DHS would administer the disaster SNAP benefit program. The application period was set for August 30, 2010 through September 3, 2010.⁴

B. Disaster SNAP Benefits Application Process and Eligibility Criteria

To apply for disaster SNAP benefits, applicants could go to any designated Family Community Resource Center, commonly referred to as an FCRC, during the application period. The applicant was required to complete an application, meet with a DHS caseworker, present proof of identity, and present proof of residence or work in the disaster area.⁵ Approved SNAP benefits applicants received a Link card, which is a form of debit card, that contained the value of SNAP benefits awarded to the applicant.⁶ At the time an applicant was seen by a DHS

² On September 27, 2011, the OEIG referred this portion of the allegations to DHS for investigation. On December 6, 2011, DHS responded to the referral, stating: Caseworker Barnes did have access to the Illinois Child Support System, the system does contain income data, Caseworker Barnes could not change or edit data or schedule court appointments, and that the allegation that Caseworker Barnes threatened the father and his family could not be substantiated. On February 1, 2012, the OEIG was informed via a letter from the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services Office of Inspector General (HFS IG) that by request of DHS, HFS IG had monitored Caseworker Barnes' access of the Illinois Child Support System. HFS IG reported to the OEIG that Caseworker Barnes did access her child support case on January 6, 2012. On February 21, 2012, the OEIG consolidated its investigation related to the third allegation of misconduct against Caseworker Barnes into its investigation of the prior two allegations of misconduct.

³ <http://www3.illinois.gov/PressReleases/ShowPressRelease.cfm?SubjectID=1&RecNum=8813> (last visited on May 23, 2013).

⁴ In light of the number of people going to DHS Family Community Resource Centers (FCRCs) to apply for benefits, and the long lines of applicants for disaster SNAP benefits, applicants were able to complete the application process after the application period provided that they arrived before the close of business on September 3, 2010 and obtained a rain check allowing them to do so.

⁵ Caseworkers were not required to otherwise verify income, residency, or disaster-related expenses.

⁶ Originally, it was intended that applicants would retrieve their Link cards the same time they were approved for benefits but the volume of customers caused DHS to instruct applicants to return later to retrieve their Link cards.

caseworker, the applicant's name was entered into DHS' visitor information system, or visitor log. The DHS visitor system recorded the applicant's name, date and time of visit, and the DHS employee with whom the applicant met.

To qualify for the disaster SNAP benefits related to the July 2010 flooding, an applicant was required, at minimum, to meet the following three criteria:

- 1) be an Illinois resident who lived or worked within the affected area at the time of the disaster;
- 2) have an intent to purchase food and prepare meals during the benefit period, July 22, 2010 and August 20, 2010; and
- 3) have adjusted income within special limits set for the program based on household size.⁷

Applicants also had to claim damage or destruction.

The DHS caseworker's role in regards to disaster SNAP benefits included accepting the application, determining eligibility, and determining the amount of benefits to be awarded to a customer by calculating adjusted income on a disaster SNAP program worksheet. The DHS caseworker was also required to compare the applicant's adjusted income to the maximum disaster income limit for the appropriate SNAP unit size.⁸ If the applicant's adjusted income was less than or equal to the income limit, the family was eligible for a fixed amount of benefits as set forth on a pre-set benefits schedule. Most of the eligibility processing was accomplished by entering the data into the system. Qualifying applicants were eligible to receive a fixed dollar amount based on SNAP unit size, with increased benefits for larger SNAP units.⁹ Applicants whose adjusted income exceeded a certain amount were ineligible.

III. INVESTIGATION

In light of the fact that two of the three allegations against Caseworker Barnes involved the same or similar conduct, and one allegation specifically identified two persons, the OEIG reviewed the DHS disaster SNAP benefit files of the two persons identified in the allegation, namely [Client 1] and [Client 2]. The OEIG also reviewed Caseworker Barnes' involvement with processing the two men's applications. As set forth below, after discovering that, in fact, Caseworker Barnes did process and award benefits to both named individuals, and was informed she was given items of value in exchange from at least one of the applicants, the OEIG expanded its investigation. The OEIG reviewed the disaster SNAP benefit files of other DHS customers that Caseworker Barnes processed, for the purpose of determining whether any of those applications had been inappropriately processed and if so, the circumstances involving those

⁷ Adjusted income was calculated by subtracting disaster-related expenses from the sum of net earned and unearned income, and accessible assets.

⁸ The SNAP unit is the number of household family members claimed on the application. Adjusted income for these members also was included in the adjusted income calculation. Applicants with larger SNAP units were entitled to receive a greater amount of benefits. The application form contained room for five names; however, applicants could attach additional sheets as necessary to claim additional household family members.

⁹ For example, an eligible one-person SNAP unit was entitled to \$200, a five-person SNAP unit was entitled to \$793, and a ten-person SNAP unit was entitled to \$1,502.

instances. The investigation revealed additional persons for whom Caseworker Barnes inappropriately processed disaster SNAP benefits applications.¹⁰

The OEIG also investigated the allegations that Caseworker Barnes' inappropriately accessed the DHS computer database to review her own child support case files. The investigation revealed that Caseworker Barnes accessed DHS files inappropriately.

A. OEIG Interviews of Individuals Who Reported Misconduct Relating to Caseworker Barnes

1. Interview of [Employee 1]

On June 7, 2011, the OEIG interviewed [Employee 1] regarding allegations that Caseworker Barnes was involved with selling disaster SNAP benefits. [Employee 1] stated that in September 2010, she received a call from her sister, [Client 3], informing her that she had heard that a DHS employee working in the Calumet Park FCRC was meeting people in parking lots and gas stations and was receiving \$250 to process their disaster SNAP benefits applications.

[Employee 1] said her sister provided her names of two customers who paid the DHS employee for such benefits – [Client 1] and [Client 2]. [Employee 1] stated that even though she was working in a different DHS office at the time, she, nonetheless, reported the matter to her DHS supervisor. In May 2011, [Employee 1] was transferred to the Calumet Park FCRC where the DHS employee alleged to be selling the benefits worked. Upon her transfer, [Employee 1] informed her new DHS supervisor, [Employee 2], of the allegations.¹¹

[Employee 1] said she called her sister to try to obtain the name of the involved DHS employee and her sister told her the employee's name was "Angie." [Employee 1] said she concluded that the DHS employee engaging in the conduct was DeAngelina Barnes. [Employee 1] also informed investigators that she knew one of the two identified customers, namely [Client 1] and said he was previously married to her aunt. [Employee 1] also said she had met the other identified customer, [Client 2], on a prior occasion.

2. Interview of DHS Customer Who Reported Activity by DeAngelina Barnes – [Client 3]

On July 5, 2011, [Client 3], the DHS customer who reported the misconduct, was interviewed. [Client 3] stated that she had gone to the DHS Roseland FCRC to apply for disaster

¹⁰ On August 28, 2012, the OEIG referred this matter to the Office of the Illinois Attorney General (AG), at which point the OEIG suspended its investigation. The AG's office referred the case back to the OEIG on November 26, 2012, at which time the OEIG resumed its investigation.

¹¹ The OEIG interviewed [Employee 2] on May 18 and July 7, 2011, and on April 4, 2013. [Employee 2] stated that [Employee 1] informed her that a caseworker in the FCRC that she oversaw was engaging in misconduct. According to [Employee 2], on May 4, 2011, [Employee 1] told [Employee 2] the following: a) that she had heard that Caseworker Barnes charged DHS customers between \$200 and \$250 to complete disaster SNAP benefits applications; b) that the incidents took place in September 2010; c) that Caseworker Barnes met the applicants in an unknown parking lot away from the Calumet Park FCRC; and d) that two of the customers were [Client 1] and [Client 2].

SNAP benefits because of flood damage she suffered. [Client 3] stated that while she stood in line outside the office, she overheard people talking about a DHS employee charging persons to process their disaster SNAP benefits applications. She heard that the employee charged the applicant \$250 or more, depending on the amount of benefits ultimately received and that the DHS employee met people at a gas station off the expressway. [Client 3] thought the DHS employee was named Jackie or Angie. [Client 3] said she did not personally know any of the people in line. Asked if the people provided any names or addresses of customers who were charged for benefits, [Client 3] said she did not overhear any names or addresses.

[Client 3] was asked about the names [Client 1] and [Client 2]. In response, [Client 3] said [Client 1] was previously married to her aunt; however, she did not recognize [Client 2's] name. [Client 3] did not recognize the name DeAngelia Barnes.

B. Disaster SNAP Benefits Application Files of [Client 1], [Client 2] and [Client 2's] Mother, [Client 4]

OEIG investigators reviewed the DHS disaster SNAP benefit files of [Client 1]¹² and [Client 2] and learned that of the approximately 360 SNAP benefit applications Caseworker Barnes processed over a two-week period, she processed the applications of [Client 1] and [Client 2] and the application of [Client 2's] mother, [Client 4]— all on the same day. DHS sequential case numbers assigned to their files revealed they likely were processed consecutively. Furthermore, the applications contained numerous similarities, as set forth below:

<u>Description of Application</u>	<u>[Client 1]</u>	<u>[Client 4]</u>	<u>[Client 2]</u>
<i>Date Application Signed by Applicant</i>	N/A	9/2/2010	9/2/2010
<i>DHS Caseworker Who Processed Application</i>	Ms. Barnes	Ms. Barnes	Ms. Barnes
<i>Date Caseworker Signed Disaster SNAP Program Worksheet</i>	9/4/2010	9/4/2010	9/4/2010
<i>Date Caseworker Processed Case</i>	9/7/2010	9/7/2010	9/7/2010
<i>Benefit Amount Approved by Caseworker</i>	\$793	\$793	\$793
<i>Date Benefits were Issued</i>	9/9/2010	date unknown	9/9/2010
<i>Sequence of Case Number Assigned¹³</i>	S11005	S11006	S11007
<i>SNAP Unit Claimed</i>	5	5	5
<i>Number of Names tied to Correct Social Security Numbers¹⁴</i>	1	1	1
<i>Number of Names tied to Incorrect Social Security Numbers</i>	4	4	4
<i>Dates Customer Visited Calumet Park FCRC (DHS Visitor Log Aug. 30, 2010 – Oct. 20, 2010)¹⁵</i>	N/A	9/9/2010	9/9/2010

¹² DHS was unable to locate the physical application of [Client 1]; however, the OEIG obtained information about [Client 1's] application from the DHS computer database, or the electronic case record.

¹³ According to a DHS employee, the last digits of the case numbers reflect the order of processing the applications.

¹⁴ Only the social security numbers of the three DHS applicants were correct.

¹⁵ There is no record of a visit to the FCRC by [Client 1] during this time period. Visitor logs indicate that [Client 2] and his mother visited the DHS facility only once during this period.

C. OEIG Interviews Regarding the Disaster SNAP Benefits Application of [Client 1]

1. Interview of [Client 1] Regarding His Disaster SNAP Benefits Application

On December 6, 2011, the OEIG interviewed [Client 1]. [Client 1] said he had known Caseworker Barnes for “years” and previously dated her. [Client 1] said he also knew Caseworker Barnes worked at the Calumet Park FCRC.

Initially, [Client 1] said he could not recall applying for disaster SNAP benefits in September 2010; however, after he was told that the food stamp program was for people who had flood damage in July and August 2010, he stated, “Is that what that was for? I didn’t know this was for a flood.” [Client 1] then described how he came to apply and receive disaster SNAP benefits.

a. Caseworker Barnes offers to assist [Client 1] obtain disaster SNAP benefits

[Client 1] stated that in approximately August 2010, he was on the telephone with Caseworker Barnes when she asked him if he wanted food stamps. [Client 1] said he told Caseworker Barnes that he did want them but was unable to go to her DHS office to complete an application because of work. According to [Client 1], Caseworker Barnes offered to bring an application to him and they met the following Saturday before Caseworker Barnes went to work. He stated that they met in the parking lot of a McDonald’s in Caseworker Barnes’ vehicle, and that she brought an application for him. [Client 1] said he filled out the application in her vehicle and gave Caseworker Barnes a copy of his driver’s license. Caseworker Barnes told him to put his name and social security number on the application and stated that he should identify four other names on the application as people living with him during the disaster period. [Client 1] stated that in addition to his name, he listed the names of four others on the application, but could not recall the names he listed. [Client 1], however, did recall asking Caseworker Barnes about social security numbers for the four persons listed. In response, she told him not to worry and she proceeded to make up social security numbers, which he wrote on the application. [Client 1] stated that when he finished the application, he signed it and gave it to Caseworker Barnes, who told him not to say anything to anyone about what had happened.

[Client 1] stated that at the time he applied for the disaster SNAP benefits he lived alone, at an address different than the one listed on his application. According to [Client 1], Caseworker Barnes was aware of his living arrangements at the time and knew he did not live at the address listed on his application. In fact, [Client 1] stated that at the time of the flood, he lived in an apartment on the second floor and suffered no flood damage. He said Caseworker Barnes never asked him whether he suffered flood damage, and he never told her he had.

[Client 1] said that a few days later he received a call from Caseworker Barnes telling him to come to the DHS office to obtain his Link card. When he arrived at the office, he got in

line and called Caseworker Barnes, who pulled him out of line and escorted him to the back of the DHS building where they were processing the cards.¹⁶

b. Caseworker Barnes seeks payment in exchange for her assistance

[Client 1] said Caseworker Barnes called him the same day he received his Link card and said she told him to check the amount on the card, which he did via a three-way call with her. [Client 1] said both he and Caseworker Barnes heard that there was over \$700 on his Link card and upon hearing the amount, [Client 1] said Caseworker Barnes said, "You owe me one." [Client 1] said that Caseworker Barnes asked him for \$200, \$225, or \$250, but could not specifically recall the amount requested. According to [Client 1], when he asked her why she was going to charge him even though they were friends, Caseworker Barnes changed her mind and told him he could buy her some lip gloss. [Client 1] said that on the Saturday following the day he picked up the Link card, he and Caseworker Barnes met at Macy's in the River Oaks mall in Calumet City. [Client 1] said that when he arrived at the store, he purchased four items of lip gloss that cost approximately \$100 for Caseworker Barnes. Afterwards, he took her out for lunch and drinks, which cost approximately \$60. [Client 1] subsequently confirmed, in a signed Affirmation of Events, statements that he had made during his interview with the OEIG.¹⁷

c. [Client 1's] involvement with [Client 2's] disaster SNAP benefits application

[Client 1] also stated that he knew [Client 2], the other individual whom Caseworker Barnes allegedly assisted. According to [Client 1], his ex-wife [Client 5] and [Client 2] had a child together. He said he knew that [Client 2] suffered some kind of flood damage and was aware [Client 2] was applying for food stamps. [Client 1] stated that he had received a call from either [Client 2] or [Client 5] informing him that [Client 2] and his mother, [Client 4], were waiting in a very long line at the DHS office in order to apply for disaster SNAP benefits.

[Client 1] said he called Caseworker Barnes and informed her that [Client 2] and his mother were in line and he described them to her. According to [Client 1], Caseworker Barnes located [Client 2], pulled him out of line, and assisted him. He said he knew Caseworker Barnes assisted [Client 2] because he received a telephone call from his ex-wife, [Client 5], regarding the matter.

2. Interview of DeAngelina Barnes Regarding the Disaster SNAP Benefits Application of [Client 1]

¹⁶ [Client 1's] account of his visit to the DHS office does not necessarily conflict with the fact that his name does not appear on the DHS visitor log reviewed by the OEIG, since he was taken out of line and escorted directly to the back by Caseworker Barnes.

¹⁷ On April 15, 2013, [Client 1] reviewed and signed an Affirmation of Events, a document prepared by the OEIG, that memorialized the statements [Client 1] made to the OEIG. In the Affirmation of Events, [Client 1] affirmed as completely true that Caseworker Barnes: gave him the disaster SNAP benefits application; told him which Social Security numbers (other than his own) to include on the application; knew he lived in a second story apartment; asked for something of value in exchange for her assistance with the application and said, "you owe me one"; and accepted cosmetics and a meal from [Client 1] in exchange for the assistance she provided to him.

On January 30, 2013, OEIG investigators interviewed DeAngelia Barnes¹⁸ relating to various matters, including her involvement regarding [Client 1]. Prior to the interview, OEIG investigators obtained a list of DHS disaster SNAP benefits applications that Caseworker Barnes processed and brought that list, which included the names of the applicants, to the interview. During this interview, investigators inquired generally about her role with processing disaster SNAP benefits applications and asked her to identify the names of all her friends, family, neighbors, and casual acquaintances from the list. During her review, Ms. Barnes identified a number of individuals but failed to identify [Client 1] as someone she knew until investigators specifically asked her about her relationship to him. In response, Ms. Barnes confirmed she knew [Client 1] and said they had been friends for about six or seven years. Ms. Barnes attributed her failure to initially identify [Client 1] to a mistake.

When asked about [Client 1's] disaster benefits application, Ms. Barnes stated that he stood in line at the DHS office and said she met with him in person at the office as she would any other DHS customer. Ms. Barnes initially stated that [Client 1] received the Link card the same day she processed his application and that she personally escorted him to get the card. However, upon further questioning, she said there was something wrong with the Link cards on the day [Client 1] initially came to the office, and said he was told to come back a few days later.

During her interview with investigators, Ms. Barnes denied:

- meeting [Client 1] at a McDonald's to fill out his application;
- instructing him to include false names or social security numbers on the application;
- that she told him to not tell anyone about the meeting;
- that she knew where [Client 1] was living;
- that she met [Client 1] at the Macy's store at the River Oaks mall; and
- that he bought her cosmetics and lunch in return for getting him a Link card.

Investigators asked Ms. Barnes if [Client 1] would have any motivation to lie to them about her actions in relation to the processing of his application. In response, Ms. Barnes said she and [Client 1] had an ongoing feud stemming from an altercation that had occurred at his home. According to Ms. Barnes, she had been at [Client 1's] home when his wife came home and they had a fight, during which [Client 1's] wife stabbed her (Ms. Barnes). Ms. Barnes said, however, that she did not call the police, file a police report, or seek medical attention.

D. Interviews Regarding the Disaster SNAP Benefits Application of [Client 2]

1. Interview of [Client 5] Regarding the Disaster SNAP Benefits Application of [Client 2]

The OEIG interviewed [Client 1's] ex-wife, [Client 5]. Prior to the interview, investigators obtained the disaster SNAP benefits application of [Client 2], which Caseworker Barnes had processed, and brought it to the interview. [Client 5] stated that she knew of Caseworker Barnes, knew she was a State employee and knew she dated [Client 1] during what

¹⁸ Ms. Barnes agreed to have her interview recorded. OEIG investigators recorded and subsequently transcribed the recording.

she called the “disaster” period, meaning the time in 2010 when the government provided assistance to those who suffered flood damage; however, she did not know whether Caseworker Barnes assisted [Client 1] in obtaining any benefits. [Client 5], however, described [Client 2’s] efforts to obtain benefits because she and [Client 2] had stood in line for benefits at the same time.

[Client 5] indicated that [Client 2] had sustained flood damage and she believed [Client 2’s] elderly mother, [Client 4], also sustained flood damage. [Client 5], however, did not recall [Client 4] standing in line with them. In addition, when asked to list the names of individuals living with [Client 2] at the time of the flood, she mentioned names that did not appear on [Client 2’s] application. [Client 5] identified the following people as residing with [Client 2] during the relevant time period: her son, [redacted]; her daughter, [redacted]; and a [redacted].¹⁹

2. Interview of [Client 2] Regarding His Disaster SNAP Benefits Application

On November 17, 2011, the OEIG interviewed [Client 2]. In light of information obtained from the interview of [Client 1], [Client 2] was again interviewed on January 26, 2012.

a. [Client 2’s] visit to DHS to apply for benefits

[Client 2] told investigators that he applied for disaster SNAP benefits because in 2010 his basement flooded and he suffered a loss of between \$2,000 and \$3,000. [Client 2] said that he and his (at the time) 83-year-old mother, [Client 4], stood in line for benefits at the Calumet Park FCRC. He said they lined up early in the morning and waited six to seven hours but never saw a caseworker. [Client 2] stated he and his mother returned the next day and waited about two hours.

Initially, [Client 2] stated that once he and his mother made it past the line, they met with a man who gave them an application to complete. He said he completed his application and gave it to a woman. He said he did not know the name of either person and said the only thing he needed to produce was his social security number and driver’s license. However, after further questioning, [Client 2] stated that a female DHS employee approached him while he waited in line. The employee provided him two blank application forms and instructed him to complete the applications and return them to her. [Client 2] said that he took both applications to his car, completed the applications (his and his mother’s) and then went inside the office and personally handed the applications to the woman who had assisted him. He said that he and his mother then departed.

[Client 2] stated it appeared the female DHS employee recognized him, although he did not know her. Asked to further explain how the female worker singled him out, [Client 2] said he was waiting in the line when someone, whose name he could not recall, said they could connect him with a DHS caseworker. [Client 2] added that it was possible [Client 1] may have

¹⁹ Because the names provided by [Client 5] were different from those listed on [Client 2’s] application, [Client 5] was asked to identify persons listed on [Client 2’s] application. [Client 5] identified them as: [redacted] – daughter of [Client 5] and [Client 2]; [redacted] – [Client 2’s] niece; [redacted] – [Client 2’s] brother; [redacted] – [Client 5] did not recognize this name but said she knew a [redacted] lived with [Client 2]. Additionally, [Client 5] confirmed that at least some of the persons listed in [Client 4’s] application were incorrect.

said something to this caseworker. [Client 2] stated that when he submitted his applications to the woman, he did not ask her why she was giving him special treatment. The description [Client 2] gave of the female employee who assisted him matched that of Caseworker Barnes; however, when asked specifically, he stated that he did not know a Ms. DeAngelia Barnes and, when shown a photograph of her, did not identify her.

b. Inaccurate information on [Client 2's] application

Prior to the interview, OEIG investigators obtained the disaster SNAP benefits application of [Client 2] that Caseworker Barnes processed and brought it to the interview. [Client 2] was asked about information listed on his disaster SNAP benefits application. When asked to identify individuals who lived with him at the time of the flood, he failed to identify all the names listed on his application. He was then presented with a copy of the application he submitted containing his signature. In response, he said the individuals identified on the application did live with him at the time of the flood. [Client 2], however, stated that he made up social security numbers for the four individuals on the application. He stated that the DHS caseworker who helped him did not tell him what to put on the application.

In response to questions about the inconsistency in identifying who was living with him at the time of the flood, [Client 2] stated he may have “messed up” on the names and social security numbers, but that it was not intentional. [Client 2] also at one point stated that it may have been the caseworker who told him to make up the social security numbers.²⁰

[Client 2] did not recall that the DHS female caseworker asked him for money when he returned the applications to her, but said it was possible she said, “You owe me.” [Client 2] stated that she never sought him out after he picked up his Link card containing his disaster SNAP benefits and that he never gave her anything for processing his application.

3. Interview of DeAngelia Barnes Regarding the Disaster SNAP Benefits Application of [Client 2]

On January 30, 2013, OEIG investigators interviewed Caseworker Barnes. Investigators asked her about the application of [Client 2] and whether she knew him or gave him any special treatment in processing his application. Caseworker Barnes denied knowing [Client 2] and further denied knowing his mother, [Client 4]. She denied assisting them or escorting them out of the long DHS line.

Investigators also asked Caseworker Barnes if she told [Client 2] to make up false social security numbers, if she asked him for any money, or if she met him at a location other than the Calumet Park FCRC to fill out his application. She denied doing any of these things.

E. Investigation of Other Disaster SNAP Benefits Applications Connected to Caseworker Barnes

²⁰ When presented with information relating to inconsistent information contained in his mother's application, he stated that he had signed [Client 4's] application on her behalf, agreed that his mother's application contained false information, but stated that any false information was unintentional.

During the course of its investigation, the OEIG learned that in addition to the disaster SNAP benefits applications of [Client 1] and [Client 2], Caseworker Barnes processed disaster SNAP benefits applications for other persons whom she knew, including family members, friends, and others.

Investigators learned about a conversation [Client 1] had with Caseworker Barnes in which she told [Client 1] that she was helping her family obtain food stamps. According to [Client 1], Caseworker Barnes told him that as a result of the Link cards she obtained for her family, her truck would get paid off quickly. [Client 1], however, did not know the names of family members Caseworker Barnes assisted.

Subsequently, investigators obtained a list of disaster SNAP benefit recipients for whom Caseworker Barnes had processed disaster SNAP benefits applications and reviewed various disaster SNAP benefit files for persons on the list. Investigators also presented Caseworker Barnes with this list, and asked her to review it and identify people whom she knew, such as relatives and friends. Included among people whom she identified, Caseworker Barnes identified [Client 6] and [Client 8] as her aunts, and [Client 7] as her cousin.

1. Review of Disaster SNAP Benefit Files Caseworker Barnes Processed

The OEIG reviewed the DHS disaster SNAP benefit files that Caseworker Barnes processed relating to people she knew. The following table sets forth the nature of the relationship various disaster SNAP benefits applicants had with Caseworker Barnes and a summary of application information she processed, as well as FCRC visits.

<u>Customer Name</u>	<u>Relationship to Caseworker Barnes</u> ²¹	<u>Date Caseworker Barnes Signed</u>	<u>Benefit Approved</u>	<u>SNAP Unit</u>	<u>DHS Visitor Log</u> ²²
[Client 6]	Family (aunt)*	9/13/2010	\$793	5	9/20/2010
[Client 7]	Family (cousin)*	9/1/2010	\$793	5	9/1/2010
[Client 8]	Family (aunt)	9/14/2010	\$793	5	9/17/2010, 9/20/2010
[Client 9]	Friend*	9/1/2010	\$952	6	9/3/2010
[Client 10]	Friend*	9/1/2010	\$793	5	No record
[Client 11]	Friend	9/1/2010	\$952	6	9/1/2010
[Client 12]	Friend	9/14/2010	\$793	5	9/17/2010
[Client 13]	Friend	9/8/2010	\$668	4	9/10/2010
[Client 14]	Friend	9/14/2010	\$793	5	No record

²¹ The relationship set forth in the table reflects the relationship as identified by Caseworker Barnes. Entries with an asterisk (*) indicate that Caseworker Barnes initially did not identify the individual as someone she knew, but upon further questioning, acknowledged she did know the individual.

²² The OEIG reviewed visitor logs for the period 8/30/2010 – 10/20/2010. In some cases, as noted, there was no record in the visitor log that the individual appeared in the Calumet Park FCRC on any date within the period.

<u>Customer Name</u>	<u>Relationship to Caseworker Barnes²¹</u>	<u>Date Caseworker Barnes Signed</u>	<u>Benefit Approved</u>	<u>SNAP Unit</u>	<u>DHS Visitor Log²²</u>
[Client 15]	Neighbor	9/3/2010	\$668	4	No record
[Client 16]	Neighbor	9/3/2010	\$793	5	9/8/2010, 9/9/2010
[Client 17]	Neighbor*	9/3/2010	\$793	5	9/13/2010
[Client 18]	Neighbor	9/8/2010	\$793	5	9/10/2010
[Client 19]	Acquaintance	9/3/2010	\$793	5	9/9/2010
[Client 20]	Acquaintance	9/3/2010	\$793	5	9/10/2010
[Client 21]	Acquaintance	9/4/2010	\$793	5	9/9/2010
[Client 22]	Acquaintance	9/4/2010	\$793	5	9/9/2010
[Client 23]	Acquaintance	9/9/2010	\$793	5	No record

As set forth above, the majority of the disaster SNAP benefits applications that Caseworker Barnes processed were for people whom reflected a SNAP unit of five or more. In addition, research and review of the social security numbers listed for a select group of applications (the highlighted entries) reveals that for each of these applications, at least two and up to four social security numbers did not match the social security number for the person claimed to be a household family member on the respective applications.

For the 19 individuals identified as people that Caseworker Barnes knew, including family members, friends, and others, Caseworker Barnes approved benefits totaling \$15,135.

2. Interview of Select Individuals Regarding Additional Disaster SNAP Benefits Applications Caseworker Barnes Processed

a. Interview of [Client 16]

On March 29, 2012, investigators interviewed [Client 16], Caseworker Barnes' former neighbor. Accompanying [Client 16] was her mother, [redacted]. As indicated in the table above, Caseworker Barnes processed [Client 16's] disaster SNAP benefits application. Prior to the interview, investigators obtained [Client 16's] disaster SNAP benefits application that Caseworker Barnes processed and brought it to the interview.

[Client 16] stated that she sustained damages as a result of the flood that occurred in 2010 and said she learned that the government was offering assistance to flood victims. [Client 16] stated she went to the DHS Calumet Park FCRC, retrieved an application, and later took it back to the DHS office for processing but could not recall who processed her claim.

[Client 16] was asked to identify the people who lived with her during the disaster period. [Client 16] identified the following persons: her son [redacted], her daughter [redacted], and her mother and father [redacted] and [redacted]. When [redacted] ([Client 16's] mother) heard [Client 16] tell investigators that she ([mother]) lived with her, [the mother] stated that she and

her husband *did not live* with their daughter—[Client 16]. In response to her mother’s statement, [Client 16] said she mistakenly included her parents on the application because it was for food stamps and she fed her parents whenever they visited her home.

[Client 16] then was shown a copy of her disaster SNAP benefits application. At this time, her mother ([redacted]) stated, “they filled it out for you, didn’t they?” Then, when told by investigators that some of the social security numbers were false, [Client 16] stated that the man at the counter told her to fill the application in with any numbers.

Initially, [Client 16] stated that she did not know an individual named Angie Barnes. However, after investigators told [Client 16] that Caseworker Barnes was her neighbor, [Client 16] said she knew her but denied that Caseworker Barnes helped her with her disaster SNAP benefits application. Subsequently, however, [Client 16] said something different. [Client 16] said that she did not go to the DHS Calumet Park FCRC either to obtain or to process her application, but obtained a blank application from a different DHS office. According to [Client 16], she took it home and completed it and afterwards saw Caseworker Barnes standing outside her home. She said that she knew Caseworker Barnes worked for the state and she gave her the paperwork. She said that Caseworker Barnes reviewed the application and told her it was incomplete. Caseworker Barnes told [Client 16] that she needed to include social security numbers of those listed on the application. When [Client 16] told Caseworker Barnes that she did not know them, [Client 16] stated that Caseworker Barnes told her to include any numbers. [Client 16] stated that thereafter she went to the DHS office to obtain her Link card. [Client 16] stated Caseworker Barnes never asked for anything in exchange for her assistance.

After the interview concluded, [Client 16] contacted investigators and asked to change her account of Caseworker Barnes’ involvement with her disaster SNAP benefits application. [Client 16] stated that after completing the application, she took it to Caseworker Barnes’ house, pulled into her driveway, honked her horn and asked Caseworker Barnes if she could take her application. Caseworker Barnes told her it was incomplete, so she took it back, completed it and returned to Caseworker Barnes’ house later that night and handed her the application. She said that Caseworker Barnes took the application while standing in her kitchen. [Client 16] stated Caseworker Barnes did not ask for anything in return for her help.

b. Interview of [Client 18]

On June 5, 2012, investigators interviewed [Client 18], another individual identified by Caseworker Barnes as someone she knew and for whom Caseworker Barnes processed a disaster SNAP benefits application. Prior to the interview, investigators obtained the [Client 18] disaster SNAP benefits application that Caseworker Barnes processed and brought it to the interview.

[Client 18] stated that the 2010 flood caused a power outage in her area that lasted for days and as a result, she lost some food stored in her refrigerator and freezer.²³ [Client 18] said

²³ When first asked about the benefits, [Client 18] denied receiving benefits, stating she had been denied benefits because she had not timely filed for them. When questioned further, [Client 18] stated there were two disasters that occurred around the same time and that she was denied benefits for the “other” disaster that occurred. [Client 18] could not provide details of the other disaster or when it occurred. On August 6, 2012, a Reliability Engineering of

she heard about the disaster SNAP benefit program through word of mouth and thought she later received an application through the mail after talking to “someone” on the phone. [Client 18] said she may have received a copy of the application from “someone” who downloaded the application from the internet.²⁴

[Client 18] said she dropped off her application at the front desk of a DHS office. She could not recall which office she went to, but stated it was possibly the Calumet Park FCRC. [Client 18] said she received around \$700 in benefits but she could not remember how she received the Link card.

[Client 18] was shown a copy of her application for disaster SNAP benefits, confirmed it was the application she completed, and identified the signature on the application as hers. When questioned about the authenticity of the social security numbers written on the application, [Client 18] said that the numbers listed for her four children were not written in her handwriting.²⁵ [Client 18] stated that she had completed the application using her children’s correct social security numbers and that someone must have “whited out” the application and changed the numbers but could not say why someone would do this. [Client 18] said she did not submit a false application, and again denied being the person who wrote the incorrect social security numbers. [Client 18] maintained that she was entitled to the benefits she received.

[Client 18] stated she knew Caseworker Barnes because their parents were neighbors, but did not consider her a friend nor did they associate. [Client 18] denied that Caseworker Barnes assisted her with the application and knowing where Caseworker Barnes worked.

c. Interview of [Client 6]—a relative of Caseworker Barnes

On April 24, 2013, the OEIG interviewed [Client 6]. As indicated above, [Client 6] was identified as a relative of Caseworker Barnes and as an individual for whom Caseworker Barnes processed a disaster SNAP benefits application.

i. Disaster SNAP Benefits

Initially [Client 6] could not recall filing an application for emergency food stamps in September 2010 saying, “I may have. I can’t say yes.” Thereafter, [Client 6] recalled learning about the program after seeing a notice in the newspaper and hearing something about it on television and the radio.

Asked if she went to a DHS office to file her application, [Client 6] replied, “If I filed, I went to an office.” She said the office would have been the Calumet Park FCRC, which was the DHS office closest to her home. [Client 6] could not remember how she got called back into the office to meet with a caseworker or if she received her Link card the same day. Asked to identify the caseworker who processed her application, [Client 6] said she did not know the name of the individual, but thought it was a man.

Exelon Corporation (ComEd) employee informed the OEIG that there were no power outages at [Client 18’s] home address during the disaster period for which she received benefits.

²⁴ DHS staff stated that applications had not been available on the internet.

²⁵ Two of the social security numbers on [Client 18’s] applications did not belong to the persons on the application.

ii. *[Client 6's] Disaster SNAP Benefits Application*

During the interview, [Client 6] reviewed a copy of her Disaster SNAP benefits application and stated, "some of this I do recognize." She stated that the signature on the application appeared to be hers.

[Client 6] stated that at the time she completed the application, eight people, including her, lived in her household. She provided the names of six of the seven persons who had lived with her but said they no longer live with her.²⁶ She reviewed the names on her application and confirmed that the list of occupants on the application – [redacted], [redacted], [redacted], and [redacted] – did not match the names of people who resided with her and that, in fact, she did not know them. She said the list of household members on the application was not accurate, saying, "I don't know who they are. I don't know them." [Client 6] said she has a son named [redacted] but was not familiar with the name [redacted]. [Client 6] then stated that she did not recall listing any names on the application and it was possible that she may have left that part of the application blank. [Client 6] also said it was possible the names were not listed on the application when she signed it. [Client 6] said she did not know how the other four names appeared on her application, adding that someone else could have written the names, but did not know who that could have been.

Asked why she put her former address on the application as her residence at the time of loss rather than her actual address, [Client 6] said she thought someone in the DHS office told her the address on the application needed to match the address on her identification. Asked again if she completed all the information on the application, [Client 6] replied, "I guess." [Client 6] said she could not recall if anyone helped her complete the application and further said she could not recall anyone else writing on the application form. She also did not know why she had not dated her signature.

With respect to the social security numbers that appeared alongside the other names listed on her application, [Client 6] said she did not recall putting the numbers down on the application. She added, "I don't think I did." [Client 6] could not explain how the numbers got on her application or who may have put them on the application.

iii. *[Client 6's] relationship with DeAngelia Barnes*

[Client 6] was asked about and identified DeAngelia Barnes as her niece who works for DHS at the Calumet Park FCRC where she submitted her emergency benefits application.²⁷ [Client 6], however, denied that Caseworker Barnes suggested that she apply for benefits and further denied that Caseworker Barnes assisted her, in any way, with her application. [Client 6] further said that she never met with nor saw her niece at the office the day she applied. [Client 6] maintained that Caseworker Barnes did not give her a blank application form to complete and that Caseworker Barnes was not the person who processed her application, saying, "I swear that she wasn't the one who I sat down with."

²⁶ [Client 6] stated that the following people lived with her: her sister, [redacted]; her niece, [redacted]; another niece, [redacted]; a great niece, [redacted] (last name unknown) who is [redacted's] daughter; a nephew, [redacted]; and another nephew, [redacted].

²⁷ [Client 6] also said her father and Caseworker Barnes' father are brothers.

[Client 6] denied Caseworker Barnes asked for money or merchandise in return for assisting her to get benefits and also said she did not pay Caseworker Barnes. [Client 6] said, "I didn't pay her any money. I swear she didn't ask me for money." [Client 6] added, "If you want to get Angie for something, I'm the wrong person; we're not that close."

iv. Telephone call between [Client 6] and Caseworker Barnes

[Client 6] told investigators that sometime prior to her interview, she had a telephone conversation with Caseworker Barnes during which she (Caseworker Barnes) discussed having been interviewed by OEIG investigators. Caseworker Barnes was reported to have said that according to OEIG investigators, someone in her family reported her to the OEIG, whom she believed to be [Client 6]. [Client 6] said she learned that Caseworker Barnes was telling everyone this and also said she told Caseworker Barnes she did not know what she was talking about and further said that she and Caseworker Barnes do not have a personal relationship.

F. Interview of Caseworker Barnes Regarding Other Disaster SNAP Benefits Applications Processed Involving People She Knew

On January 30, 2013, investigators interviewed DeAngelia Barnes. In addition to asking her about the disaster SNAP benefits applications of [Client 1] and [Client 2], investigators asked her about other disaster SNAP benefits applications she processed in 2010 involving persons she knew.

1. Caseworker Barnes Identifies Acquaintances for Whom She Processed Disaster SNAP Benefits

As noted above, Caseworker Barnes was presented with a list of applicants for whom she had processed disaster SNAP benefits applications and was asked to identify the names of any applicant she knew personally or to whom she had some sort of personal connection. Caseworker Barnes appeared to carefully review the list for about eight minutes. She initially identified 13 names from the list, including friends and family members, and confirmed processing applications for these individuals.²⁸ After further questioning by investigators and further review, she identified an additional six names.²⁹

2. Caseworker Barnes' Statements Regarding the Disaster SNAP Benefits Applications of Associates She Processed

a. Applications of [Client 16] and [Client 15]

Investigators questioned Caseworker Barnes about [Client 16's] disaster SNAP benefits application she had processed. Caseworker Barnes confirmed knowing [Client 16], said they lived in the same neighborhood and said they had known each other for about 10 years. Caseworker Barnes said she also knew [Client 16's] family and said that [Client 16] came to the

²⁸ The thirteen persons whom Caseworker Barnes initially identified included: [Client 11], [Client 19], [Client 16], [Client 20], [Client 15], [Client 21], [Client 22], [Client 23], [Client 13], [Client 18], [Client 8], [Client 12], and [Client 14].

²⁹ The additional six persons Caseworker Barnes identified included: [Client 1], [Client 6], [Client 7], [Client 9], [Client 10], and [Client 17].

Calumet Park FCRC and she processed her application. Caseworker Barnes denied that [Client 16] came to her home to give her the application and said she did not know who the people [Client 16] listed on the application were, or who lived in her home, stating that she entered whatever information she saw on the application. She also stated that she should not be held accountable for the information individuals listed on their applications. She acknowledged, however, that it would be inappropriate for an individual to include people who did not live with them on this application, and that had she known the application contained false information, processing it would constitute fraud. Caseworker Barnes denied asking for or receiving anything for processing the application.

Caseworker Barnes also confirmed processing the application of [Client 15], the husband of [Client 16]. Caseworker Barnes stated that she did not know who was living with [Client 15] and denied telling him to put down false names and social security numbers. She denied asking for or receiving anything for processing the application.

b. Applications of [Client 18], [Client 24], and [Client 17]

Caseworker Barnes said she knew [Client 18]. In contrast to [Client 18's] statements, Caseworker Barnes stated that [Client 18] came to the Calumet Park FCRC, and confirmed that they met face-to-face and that she processed [Client 18's] application. Caseworker Barnes, however, denied telling [Client 18] to include false names and social security numbers on the application and denied asking for or receiving anything in return for processing the application.

According to Caseworker Barnes, she did process the application of [Client 24], [Client 18's] twin sister. Caseworker Barnes stated that [Client 24's] application was different from the others because she was already receiving food stamp benefits under the regular SNAP benefit program.

Caseworker Barnes also said she processed the application of [Client 17], the mother of [Client 18] and [Client 24]. During her interview, Caseworker Barnes had been shown the list of applicants whom she had processed but she did not highlight [Client 17's] name when asked to identify persons whom she knew on this list. After direct questioning, Caseworker Barnes recognized that she knew [Client 17] and was familiar with her address. Caseworker Barnes, however, stated that she did not know who was living with [Client 17] at the time of the flood and denied asking for or receiving anything in return for processing her application.

c. Application of [Client 6]

Caseworker Barnes stated that she processed the application of [Client 6], her aunt. Caseworker Barnes agreed that there were names on her aunt's application that she did not recognize and said her aunt stood in line at the office to apply for benefits but denied telling her to include false information, such as names of people residing with her or social security numbers. She also denied asking for or receiving anything for processing her aunt's application.

While Caseworker Barnes did not originally identify [Client 6] as someone she knew when asked to review the list of applications she had processed, she later indicated that she should have identified [Client 6] as someone she knew.

d. Application of [Client 9]

Caseworker Barnes stated that she processed the application of [Client 9], a family friend and said she and [Client 9] see each other multiple times a week, but she was not familiar with the names he listed on his application and did not know why the social security numbers were false.³⁰ She denied asking for or receiving anything for processing his application.

As with others whose names were on the list shown to Caseworker Barnes, she did not initially identify [Client 9] as someone she knew even though she later admitted to seeing him regularly. Only upon further inquiry, did she indicate that she probably overlooked that name.

e. Additional names of applicants Caseworker Barnes knew and failed to disclose

In light of the fact that Caseworker Barnes failed to disclose her relationship with persons whose disaster SNAP benefits she processed, investigators asked her to again look at the list of applications she processed and identify other persons she knew. In response, Caseworker Barnes identified her cousin, [Client 7], and her “good friend,” [Client 10].

3. Caseworker Barnes Questioned About Applications She Processed

Investigators generally asked Caseworker Barnes about the applications she processed that belonged to people with whom she was acquainted. In response, Caseworker Barnes could not explain why the applications of her acquaintances consistently claimed five people as living in their household and why most applications contained false social security numbers. Caseworker Barnes confirmed that if she believed an application was fraudulent she had a duty to report her suspicions. She explained, however, that she was instructed to take the customer’s photo identification and to enter information into the DHS system exactly as it appeared on the applications. In addition, she stated that she mentioned to her supervisor during a morning meeting her general suspicions regarding applications that listed seven to thirteen names, but was told to process the applications regardless and to simply remind applicants that fraudulent information would be further investigated. She also stated that other case workers voiced similar concerns, but could not recall the identity of the other coworkers. Ms. Barnes stated that she did not, however, report any individual applications that she viewed as suspicious.

Investigators asked Caseworker Barnes why certain applicants would say that she told them to make up fictitious names and social security numbers, that she met them outside of the DHS office to fill out the applications, and that she asked for or received favors and payments in return for processing the applications. Caseworker Barnes stated that these people must know each other, and that they “independently lied with the same lies.”

4. Caseworker Barnes Asked About DHS Policies

Caseworker Barnes acknowledged receipt of the DHS employee handbook and its policies. Investigators presented Caseworker Barnes with a copy of the DHS handbook and reviewed several provisions with her. Specifically, Caseworker Barnes reviewed the following prohibitions imposed upon DHS employees:

³⁰ Five of the six social security numbers listed on [Client 9’s] application were false.

- participating in and condoning fraud, dishonesty, misrepresentation;
- socializing with customers or their family members;
- receiving or soliciting gifts;
- authorizing benefits and deciding eligibility for relatives; and,
- misusing computers and state equipment.

Caseworker Barnes also reviewed the provisions regarding her duty to protect confidential information.

Ms. Barnes acknowledged familiarity with these provisions and her responsibilities with respect to these provisions. She also, however, admitted to processing applications for which she held suspicions as being fraudulent.

Caseworker Barnes, however, denied violating the policy prohibiting DHS employees from socializing with customers. She explained that during a meeting, her supervisors told her that the policy only applied to the regular SNAP benefit program and not the disaster SNAP benefit program. Caseworker Barnes stated that DHS policy would have prohibited her from processing regular SNAP benefit applications for the people she identified as friends and relatives.

G. Interviews of DHS [Employees] Regarding the Disaster SNAP Benefits Application Process

On April 4, 2013, the OEIG interviewed [Employee 2]. [Employee 2] was asked about DHS' limitation on caseworkers handling applications for certain customers, such as caseworker family members, household members, close friends, or neighbors. [Employee 2] referred to this restriction as the "Golden Rule" and said it applied throughout the disaster SNAP benefits application period. [Employee 2] said the rule was never relaxed. For example, [Employee 2] said that if a caseworker was assigned to process the application of a relative or neighbor, he or she should have alerted a manager or supervisor, in order to reassign the customer to a different caseworker. [Employee 2] could not recall if her staff was reminded of this rule during the disaster SNAP benefits application period. [Employee 2] said Caseworker Barnes never alerted her about being assigned a relative's or friend's case.

During the disaster SNAP application process, [Employee 2] stated there were management team meetings, wherein managers would discuss, among other things, the events of the prior day and any problems that surfaced. [Employee 2] said there was never a time when Caseworker Barnes came to her and raised any concerns about any SNAP applications being questionable or possibly fraudulent. [Employee 2] stated that Caseworker Barnes is a person of few words, and any statements made by her about fraudulent disaster applications would have stood out in her mind. [Employee 2] stated that nobody, "not a manager, not Angie Barnes," told her they believed an application was fraudulent.

The OEIG also interviewed three Calumet Park FCRC caseworker managers. Each of the three confirmed that Caseworker Barnes never said anything directly to them or openly in a staff meeting about her belief that some of applications she was processing were fraudulent.

Moreover, the two caseworker managers who were asked about the policy confirmed that processing the application of a friend or family member was a standing policy, even during the disaster SNAP benefits application processing period.

H. Caseworker Barnes' Access of DHS Files

During the January 30, 2013 interview of Caseworker Barnes, she acknowledged that accessing DHS systems without a legitimate business purpose and for personal gain would be a violation of DHS policy. Caseworker Barnes also acknowledged that DHS customers have a reasonable expectation that their information be kept safe, confidential, and not misused. Caseworker Barnes, nonetheless, said she accessed DHS files without proper authorization and for non-work related reasons. Specifically, she said she accessed the DHS child support system to check her personal child support case.

Caseworker Barnes said she accessed the system about 10 times between 2009 and 2011 in order to obtain information on her daughter's father. She explained that she accessed the information because her daughter's father was delinquent in paying child support. When presented with documentation demonstrating that she last accessed the file on January 6, 2012, Caseworker Barnes agreed that the access history documentation was accurate. Caseworker Barnes did not dispute she violated DHS policy by accessing the system for that purpose.³¹

Although Caseworker Barnes initially denied knowing [Client 5], upon further questioning, she said she accessed the DHS systems to search for personal information about both [Client 5] and [Client 1].³² Caseworker Barnes said she accessed their files at least once or twice, but no more than five times. She said that when she accessed the files, her intent was to find [Client 5's] address, income, place of employment, and date of birth.

IV. ANALYSIS

As a condition of employment, DHS employees are obligated to comply with policies and regulations. Some of these policies are set out in the DHS Employee Handbook, which provides the following expectation for employee personal conduct:

An employee holds a position of public trust and is expected to conduct himself or herself in a responsible, professional manner, refraining from conduct which could adversely affect the confidence of the public.³³

³¹ The OEIG learned from the HFS IG that Caseworker Barnes had accessed her child support case at least on January 6, 2012. As part of the OEIG's concurrent investigation of the allegation that Caseworker Barnes inappropriately accessed her child support case, on March 27, 2012, the OEIG requested that HFS IG place a monitor on the Key Information Delivery System (KIDS) for the period March 29, 2012 through April 30, 2012, to detect any additional system access by Caseworker Barnes. HFS IG reported that according to its monitoring, Caseworker Barnes did not access her child support case through KIDS during that time period.

³² During the OEIG interview of [Client 5], [Client 5] also stated that she had learned from [Client 1] that Caseworker Barnes had accessed [Client 5's] public aid account to determine her benefit amount.

³³ DHS Employee Handbook, Section V – Employee Personal Conduct.

The investigation reveals that not only did Caseworker Barnes generally fail to refrain from conduct that could adversely affect the confidence of the public, she violated a number of specific policies as set forth herein.

A. Caseworker Barnes Participated in and Condoned Fraud

One of the rules of personal conduct set forth in the DHS Employee Handbook states that “An employee shall not participate in or condone fraud, dishonesty, or misrepresentation in the performance of duties.”³⁴

During the course of the investigation, both [Client 1] and [Client 16] told OEIG investigators that Caseworker Barnes was aware their applications contained false information. [Client 1] stated that Caseworker Barnes instructed him to include false information and that she knew he did not live in the affected disaster area, personally supplied the false social security numbers that he included on his application, and instructed him to create a five person household. Similarly, [Client 16] stated that Caseworker Barnes told her to include any social security numbers on the application after [Client 16] told Caseworker Barnes that she did not know the real social security numbers.

Although Caseworker Barnes denied giving these instructions, the OEIG credits the statements of [Client 1] and [Client 16] over those of Caseworker Barnes, in part, because of the consistency in the applicants’ statements coupled with the fact that the two applications did contain false information. Specifically, the OEIG concludes that Caseworker Barnes not only instructed [Client 1] and [Client 16] to include false information but she likely instructed other friends and family members to do the same.

As reflected in the tables above, the applications Ms. Barnes processed for family members, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances routinely claimed a five-person SNAP unit, were approved for benefits totaling \$793, and contained false social security numbers. Fifteen of the nineteen applicants Caseworker Barnes identified as being her friends, family members, and acquaintances claimed they had a five person SNAP unit and were approved by Caseworker Barnes to receive \$793 in benefits. The OEIG concludes that these instances were not a coincidence and further corroborate the statements of [Client 1] and [Client 16].

For seven of those customers, the OEIG also conducted a search of the social security numbers identified on their applications. That search revealed that each of the seven applications contained at least two false social security numbers. Moreover, the charts reveal that the majority of those applicants never even visited the DHS Calumet Park Office except to pick up their Link cards. Specifically, the visitor logs showed that seventeen of the nineteen applicants either never visited the DHS Calumet Park office during the disaster SNAP benefits application period or only did so *after* Caseworker Barnes had processed their applications to retrieve their Link cards.

In light of the investigative findings, the OEIG concludes that Caseworker Barnes did instruct at least two DHS applicants to include false information on their disaster SNAP benefits

³⁴ DHS Employee Handbook, Section V – Employee Personal Conduct.

applications and, in doing so, violated DHS policy and knowingly participated in the submission of false applications. Thus, the allegation that Caseworker Barnes participated in and condoned fraud when she instructed and supplied false information used on the benefit applications for:

- [Client 1] is **FOUNDED**; and
- [Client 16] is **FOUNDED**.

The OEIG further concludes that Caseworker Barnes subsequently processed DHS applications knowing they contained false information. Therefore, the allegation that Caseworker Barnes participated in and condoned fraud when she knowingly processed:

- [Client 1's] application which contained false information is **FOUNDED**; and
- [Client 16's] application which contained false information if **FOUNDED**.

B. Caseworker Barnes Violated DHS Policy by Processing Disaster SNAP Benefits Applications for Her Relatives

The DHS Employee Handbook places restrictions on DHS employees with respect to whose applications they may process, stating:

An employee may not authorize assistance, benefits, or services to relatives, household members or persons for whom they have custodial responsibility. Furthermore, an employee may not be directly involved in deciding or redetermining eligibility for DHS services for relatives or household members, or for whom they have custodial responsibility.³⁵

DHS employees at the Calumet Park FCRC are familiar with this rule and, in fact, [Employee 2], called this the “Golden Rule.”

The DHS case records reflect that Caseworker Barnes processed the disaster SNAP benefits applications of her relatives, [Client 7], [Client 6], and [Client 8]. Caseworker Barnes identified these individuals as her family members, and she admitted that she was directly involved in deciding DHS disaster SNAP benefit eligibility for these three individuals.

While Caseworker Barnes claimed that the “Golden Rule” was relaxed during the disaster SNAP benefits application period, Calumet Park FCRC employees and managers interviewed stated that the rule remained in effect the entire time of the disaster SNAP benefit processing period. Therefore, the OEIG finds that Caseworker Barnes’ defense is not credible. The OEIG further finds the allegation that Caseworker Barnes processed the disaster SNAP benefits applications of relatives including:

- her cousin [Client 7] in violation of DHS policy is **FOUNDED**;
- her aunt [Client 6] in violation of DHS policy is **FOUNDED**; and
- her aunt [Client 8] in violation of DHS policy is **FOUNDED**.

C. Caseworker Barnes Socialized with DHS Customers in Violation of DHS Policy

³⁵ DHS Employee Handbook, Section V – Relatives Applying for or Receiving Services.

The personal conduct rules set forth in the DHS Employee Handbook also state that “[a]n employee shall refrain from socializing with customers, the customers’ family members, or individuals closely associated with the customer or the customers’ family when such a relationship may constitute or give the appearance of a conflict of interest.”³⁶

During her OEIG interview, Caseworker Barnes identified 19 DHS customers whom she knew. Included amongst them were people with whom she socialized, including, friends, relatives, and former co-workers. The nature of her relationship with these individuals necessarily created the appearance of a conflict as she simultaneously served as their caseworker, who was the person determining whether they would qualify for DHS benefits. Moreover, an actual conflict existed as it appears Caseworker Barnes placed the interests of her friends and relatives over those of the state when she processed and approved benefits for individuals who were not entitled to them. Specifically, in [Client 1’s] case, Caseworker Barnes allowed her personal interests to supersede those of the state. As such, the allegation that Caseworker Barnes socialized with customer:

- [Client 9] in violation of DHS policy is **FOUNDED**;
- [Client 11] in violation of DHS policy is **FOUNDED**;
- [Client 10] in violation of DHS policy is **FOUNDED**;
- [Client 1] in violation of DHS policy is **FOUNDED**;
- [Client 13] in violation of DHS policy is **FOUNDED**;
- [Client 12] in violation of DHS policy is **FOUNDED**; and
- [Client 14] in violation of DHS policy is **FOUNDED**.

D. Caseworker Barnes Engaged in Administrative Malfeasance

The DHS Employee Handbook sets forth the following statement with respect to the “Performance of Duties”:

State law requires that staff follow the rules and regulations of DHS in the performance of their duties. Employees who willfully misappropriate resources, misuse their position, fail to report fraud or perform other unlawful actions, may be guilty of administrative malfeasance.³⁷

The OEIG concludes that Caseworker Barnes misused her position in order to obtain benefits for [Client 1] to which he was not entitled. [Client 1] himself admitted that he did not sustain any flood damage, did not live in the disaster area, and thus was not entitled to receive disaster SNAP benefits. [Client 1] stated that Caseworker Barnes provided him benefits without inquiring whether he sustained any damage or loss related to the floods. In fact, even if [Client 1] had suffered flood damage, according to [Client 1], Caseworker Barnes was aware that he resided alone, thus the extent of the benefits provided to him, based on a five-person household, was based on knowingly false information. Nonetheless, Caseworker Barnes misused her position as a DHS caseworker to process and approve benefits for [Client 1] based on a five-person household. Therefore, the allegation that Caseworker Barnes engaged in administrative

³⁶ DHS Employee Handbook, Section V – Employee Personal Conduct.

³⁷ DHS Employee Handbook, Section V – Performance of Duties.

malfeasance when she misused her position to approve disaster SNAP benefits for [Client 1] is **FOUNDED**.

Furthermore, Caseworker Barnes facilitated the appropriation of disaster SNAP funds to applicants not so entitled. As such, the allegation that Caseworker Barnes engaged in administrative malfeasance when she willfully misappropriated resources is **FOUNDED**.

Moreover, Caseworker Barnes knew that the application submitted by [Client 1] was fraudulent and failed to report that fraud. As such, the allegation that Caseworker Barnes engaged in administrative malfeasance when she failed to report [Client 1's] fraud is **FOUNDED**.

E. Caseworker Barnes Failed to Report Suspected Misconduct

The DHS Employee Handbook also sets forth a duty regarding Reporting of Alleged Misconduct.³⁸ It states that:

All employees of DHS are charged with reporting promptly any incident of alleged or suspected misconduct to the proper authority or entity upon becoming aware of the incident.

Instances of misconduct include but are not limited to:

...

7. Falsification of official documents or records;

...

Caseworker Barnes told OEIG investigators that she had suspected a number of the disaster SNAP benefits applications she processed were falsified. In addition, Caseworker Barnes claimed that she reported her suspicions to managers and even raised the issue during a meeting with managers and co-workers. However, the OEIG interviewed a number of DHS employees, including managers, each of whom denied ever hearing from Caseworker Barnes that she suspected an application was false. As such, in the absence of evidence confirming that she reported, the allegation that Caseworker Barnes failed to report suspected misconduct is **FOUNDED**.

F. Caseworker Barnes Improperly Accessed Confidential Child Support Files

The DHS Employee Handbook prohibits a DHS employee from “disclos[ing] confidential information or records on recipients . . . in violation of DHS directives, state law, or federal law.”³⁹ State law protects the confidentiality of DHS clients and their cases by prohibiting the use of such information for purposes other than the “administration of the assistance programs” for a client, such as for “a client’s initial or continuing eligibility for public assistance,” prohibits use “for . . . personal . . . purposes,” and further provides enumerated

³⁸ DHS Employee Handbook, Section V – Reporting of Alleged Misconduct.

³⁹ DHS Employee Handbook, Section V – Employee Personal Conduct.

restrictions for the “use or disclosure of individual or case information obtained from the household” relating to the provision of food stamps (SNAP).⁴⁰

Furthermore, when Caseworker Barnes accessed such information she did so using State equipment. This use, in itself, is a violation DHS policy, which states that a DHS employee may not use “State equipment for inappropriate purposes, for purposes not related to State of Illinois business, or for personal gain.”⁴¹

Caseworker Barnes herself acknowledged that DHS customers have a reasonable expectation that their information is kept safe, confidential, and is not to be misused and was aware that if a caseworker accessed the system for a reason that was not work-related it would be wrong and a violation of DHS policy regarding misuse of computer systems for either personal use or personal gain.

Caseworker Barnes admitted that she used DHS equipment to access her own child support case “several times” – approximately ten times – for a personal purpose. Therefore, the allegation that Caseworker Barnes improperly accessed her child support case in violation of DHS policy is **FOUNDED**.

Caseworker Barnes also admitted that she accessed DHS systems between two and five times in order to gather personal information on [Client 1] and [Client 5]. Therefore, the allegation that Caseworker Barnes improperly accessed [Client 1’s] DHS records for her own personal use is **FOUNDED**. The allegation that Caseworker Barnes improperly accessed [Client 5’s] DHS records for her own personal use is **FOUNDED**.

G. Caseworker Barnes Failed to Cooperate with the OEIG

Pursuant to the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (Ethics Act), “It is the duty of every officer and employee under the jurisdiction of an Executive Inspector General . . . to cooperate with the Executive Inspector General . . . in any investigation undertaken pursuant to this Act. Failure to cooperate includes, but is not limited to, intentional omissions and knowing false statements.”⁴²

During her January 30, 2013 interview with the OEIG, Caseworker Barnes made what the OEIG deems to be numerous intentional false statements regarding her role in approving disaster SNAP benefits for her friends and family members. Specifically, Caseworker Barnes told OEIG investigators that during the disaster SNAP benefit processing period, there were no restrictions that would have prevented her from processing applications for family and friends. In fact, during her interview she stated that caseworkers were told by “management” during internal meetings regarding disaster SNAP benefits that the prohibition did not apply because, “this is a different situation.”

⁴⁰ 89 Ill. Adm. Code 10.230(a), (b) & (e).

⁴¹ DHS Employee Handbook, Section V – Employee Personal Conduct.

⁴² 5 ILCS 430/20-70.

Caseworker Barnes also told OEIG investigators that she alerted DHS managers during a meeting that she had suspicions regarding false information on disaster SNAP applications and that she reported this to a supervisor. When she could not identify the name of the supervisor to whom she reported her suspicions, she stated that her reporting was not to one individual supervisor but during a meeting “in front of the workers and management.”

The OEIG interviewed not only the [Employee 2], but also three Calumet Park FCRC caseworker managers. None of these individuals stated that the restriction from processing applications for family members or friends was lifted during the disaster SNAP application period. In fact, [Employee 2] referred to this rule as the “Golden Rule” and confirmed that the rule was never relaxed. In addition, these Calumet Park managers each denied that Caseworker Barnes reported suspicions regarding false disaster SNAP applications. The OEIG credits the statements of these four witnesses over the statements made by Caseworker Barnes.

In addition to those statements, the OEIG finds that Caseworker Barnes made statements that conflicted with those of other witnesses, such as [Client 1] and [Client 16]. The OEIG credits the statements of [Client 1] and [Client 16] regarding Caseworker Barnes’ actions and involvement in relation to processing their disaster SNAP benefits over the statements of Caseworker Barnes.

Based upon the investigation, the OEIG concludes that Caseworker Barnes failed to cooperate with the OEIG when she knowingly and falsely stated that she:

- was told by management during a general meeting that the prohibition against processing the benefit applications of family and friends was lifted during the disaster SNAP period and thus this allegation is **FOUNDED**;
- notified managers during a general meeting that she had suspicions that disaster SNAP applications were fraudulent and thus this allegation is **FOUNDED**;
- did not instruct applicants to provide false information on their applications when in fact the evidence reveals otherwise and thus this allegation is **FOUNDED**;
- did not meet [Client 1] at a McDonald’s to fill out his application when in fact the evidence reveals otherwise and thus this allegation is **FOUNDED**;
- did not instruct [Client 1] not to tell anyone about their meeting when in fact the evidence reveals otherwise and thus this allegation is **FOUNDED**;
- did not know where [Client 1] was living when in fact the evidence reveals otherwise and thus this allegation is **FOUNDED**;
- did not pull [Client 2] and [Client 4] out of line to process their applications when in fact the evidence reveals otherwise and thus this allegation is **FOUNDED**; and
- did not receive [Client 16’s] application at her (Caseworker Barnes’) home when in fact the evidence reveals otherwise and thus this allegation is **FOUNDED**.

The OEIG further concludes that Caseworker Barnes failed to cooperate when she initially failed to disclose to investigators that she had processed the disaster SNAP benefits applications for: her aunt [Client 6]; her cousin [Client 7]; her friend of six or seven years, [Client 1]; a friend whom she sees multiple times a week, [Client 9]; her “good friend,” [Client 10]; and her neighbor, [Client 17]. Therefore, the allegation that Caseworker Barnes failed to

cooperate with the OEIG investigation when she initially failed to disclose the identity of family, friends, and neighbors for whom she processed disaster SNAP benefits applications is **FOUNDED**.

H. Caseworker Barnes Sold DHS Benefits to Benefit Applicants

DHS policy also restricts certain employee interactions with DHS customers, such as accepting gifts, borrowing funds, or accepting money from a customer or the customers' relatives or friends for personal use.⁴³

It was originally alleged that Caseworker Barnes sold DHS benefits to customers. [Client 1] maintained that he purchased cosmetics and lunch for Caseworker Barnes in return for her processing his application. Nonetheless, the OEIG could not substantiate those statements. Moreover, the other individuals interviewed denied that they provided anything or that Caseworker Barnes asked that they provide anything in exchange for her processing their benefits. As such, the OEIG finds insufficient evidence to conclude Caseworker Barnes accepted items of value in exchange for awarding DHS benefits to applicants. Therefore, that allegation is **UNFOUNDED**.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Following due investigation, the OEIG issues the following findings with regard to Caseworker Barnes' involvement in the allegations investigated by the OEIG:

- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes participated in and condoned fraud when she instructed and supplied false information to be used on the benefit application for [Client 1].
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes participated in and condoned fraud when she instructed and supplied false information to be used on the benefit application for [Client 16].
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes participated in and condoned fraud when she processed [Client 1's] application knowing it contained false information.
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes participated in and condoned fraud when she processed [Client 16's] application knowing it contained false information.
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes violated DHS policy when she processed the disaster SNAP benefits application of her cousin [Client 7].
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes violated DHS policy when she processed the disaster SNAP benefits application of her aunt [Client 6].
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes violated DHS policy when she processed the disaster SNAP benefits application of her aunt [Client 8].
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes violated DHS policy when she socialized with DHS customer [Client 9].
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes violated DHS policy when she socialized with DHS customer [Client 11].

⁴³ DHS Employee Handbook, Section V – Employee Interaction with Customers.

- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes violated DHS policy when she socialized with DHS customer [Client 10].
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes violated DHS policy when she socialized with DHS customer [Client 1].
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes violated DHS policy when she socialized with DHS customer [Client 13].
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes violated DHS policy when she socialized with DHS customer [Client 12].
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes violated DHS policy when she socialized with DHS customer [Client 14].
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes engaged in administrative malfeasance when she misused her position to approve disaster SNAP benefits for [Client 1].
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes engaged in administrative malfeasance when she willfully misappropriated resources by facilitating the appropriation of disaster SNAP funds to applicants not entitled to those funds.
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes engaged in administrative malfeasance when she failed to report [Client 1's] fraud.
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes failed to report suspected misconduct.
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes violated DHS policy when she improperly accessed her child support case.
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes violated DHS policy when she improperly accessed [Client 1's] DHS records for her own personal use.
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes violated DHS policy when she improperly accessed [Client 5's] DHS records for her own personal use.
- **UNFOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes sold DHS benefits to benefit applicants.

Following due investigation, the OEIG issues the following findings with regard to Caseworker Barnes' cooperation with the OEIG's investigation:

- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes failed to cooperate with the OEIG investigation, in violation of the Ethics Act, when she knowingly and falsely stated that she was told by management during a general meeting that the prohibition against processing the benefit applications of family and friends was lifted during the disaster SNAP period.
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes failed to cooperate with the OEIG investigation, in violation of the Ethics Act, when she knowingly and falsely stated she that notified managers during a general meeting that she had suspicions that disaster SNAP applications were fraudulent.
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes failed to cooperate with the OEIG investigation, in violation of the Ethics Act, when she knowingly and falsely stated that she did not instruct applicants to provide false information on their applications.
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes failed to cooperate with the OEIG investigation, in violation of the Ethics Act, when she knowingly and falsely stated that she did not meet [Client 1] at a McDonald's to fill out his application.

- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes failed to cooperate with the OEIG investigation, in violation of the Ethics Act, when she knowingly and falsely stated that she did not instruct [Client 1] not to tell anyone about their meeting.
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes failed to cooperate with the OEIG investigation, in violation of the Ethics Act, when she knowingly and falsely stated that she did not know where [Client 1] was living.
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes failed to cooperate with the OEIG investigation, in violation of the Ethics Act, when she knowingly and falsely stated that she did not pull [Client 2] and [Client 4] out of line to process their applications.
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes failed to cooperate with the OEIG investigation, in violation of the Ethics Act, when she knowingly and falsely stated that she did not receive [Client 16's] application at her (Caseworker Barnes') home.
- **FOUNDED** – Caseworker Barnes failed to cooperate with the OEIG investigation, in violation of the Ethics Act, when she initially failed to disclose the identity of family, friends, and neighbors for whom she processed disaster SNAP benefits applications.

In light of the substantial number of findings of wrongful conduct by Caseworker Barnes, including findings that she violated the Ethics Act by failing to cooperate with the OEIG investigation in that she repeatedly made knowing, false statements to OEIG investigators, the OEIG recommends that Caseworker Barnes be terminated. The OEIG will refer this matter to the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services Inspector General regarding the applicants' (non-state employees) actions in submitting apparent false documents to DHS.

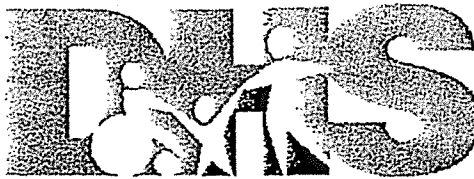
No further action is required and this matter is considered closed.

Date: December 2, 2013

**Office of Executive Inspector General for
the Agencies of the Illinois Governor**
69 W. Washington Street, Ste. 3400
Chicago, IL 60602

Spiridoula Mavrothalasitis
Assistant Inspector General

Donald Rehmer
Senior Investigator



Illinois Department of Human Services

Pat Quinn, Governor

Michelle R.B. Saddler, Secretary

Office of the Secretary
401 South Clinton Street • Chicago, Illinois 60607
100 South Grand Avenue East • Springfield, Illinois 62762

December 30, 2013

Mr. Ricardo Meza
Executive Inspector General
Office of the Executive Inspector General
For the Agencies of the Illinois Governor
69 West Washington Street, Suite 3400
Chicago, Illinois 60602

RE OEIG Complaint #11-00696

Dear Executive Inspector General Meza:

The Department of Human Services has received the referenced Final Summary Report issued by your office, and concurs with your recommendation that Caseworker DeAngelia Barnes be terminated. Ms. Barnes was placed on administrative leave on December 12, 2013 and the Union has been notified of our intent to discharge this employee. We will keep your office advised on this matter.

Please let me know if you have any concerns or questions.

Sincerely,

Michelle R.B. Saddler
Secretary

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Pat Quinn, Governor

Illinois Department of Human Services

Michelle R.B. Saddler, Secretary

100 South Grand Avenue, East • Springfield, Illinois 62762
401 South Clinton Street • Chicago, Illinois 60607

July 21, 2014

Via e-mail to Kristy Shores on behalf of:

Ricardo Meza

Executive Inspector General

Office of the Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor

69 West Washington Street, Suite 3400

Chicago, Illinois 60602

RE: Response to OEIG Complaint Number 11-00696

Dear Executive Inspector General Meza:

This letter is in response to a final report regarding Complaint Number 11-00696, involving DeAngelia Barnes. She was discharged effective February 7, 2014. She grieved her separation. All grievances were heard and a final hearing has been held. It was agreed she would resign by July 1, 2014. No resignation letter, however, has been received, so her status remains discharged, rather than resigned. Nevertheless, all DHS activity regarding this matter is complete.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Regards,

Robert J. Grindle

Deputy General Counsel and Ethics Officer